

# MEDREGION UPDATE

Regional Office Tunis

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**MEPI Medregion Update** Newsletter is produced by the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) Regional Office at the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, Tunisia.

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We welcome your comments and suggestions.

## Women and Municipalities: A Platform for Political Participation

*By Arabelle Bohsali*

On April 13, 2010 the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in Beirut launched a media campaign for its project "Women & Municipalities: a Platform for Political Participation", a project funded by MEPI. The event, which was organized by the YWCA Center for Women in Crisis, was held under the patronage of Lebanese Minister of Interior and Municipalities H.E. Ziad Baroud.

The project aims at promoting women's participation in the local political life ahead of the 2010 municipal elections through public awareness and capacity building for women candidates. The project, which has continuously acknowledged the support of MEPI, offered 21 Lebanese women a series of full day training sessions on local municipal elections over a 12

week period.

The training courses included candidate profiling, community project development, communication, contacts with the media, domestic municipal laws, organization of local municipalities, and other subjects related to candidacy. This project provided the participating women with the knowledge about municipalities, planning for candidacy, profiling, campaigning, and team work, in addition to focusing on

developing their own projects for their local municipalities. ■

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*A poster inciting women to participate in the Decision-making process*

## Spreading the Culture of Children's Rights

The Tanweer Foundation for Education and Development is fostering a democratic atmosphere and spreading the culture of citizenship in Egypt through teaching children's rights, particularly girl's rights, in accordance with international conventions.

Through the MEPI-funded project entitled "Activation of Citizenship Inside Five Governmental Elementary Schools in the Minia Governorate", the Tanweer Foundation is working with five elementary schools, targeting

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*Child Rights group*

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4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade students, teachers, school administrators, and parents.

First, Tanweer identified and selected five schools and formed coordinating committees in each school. It conducted an initial series of meetings with school



teachers, parents, and school administrators to raise awareness on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) preventing violence against girls, and equity between girls and boys.

One hundred and seventy-one teachers and sixty-one parents attended the meetings, during which a wide range of topics were discussed, including plans to form a child rights groups at each school.

Following these initial meetings, The Tanweer Association formed child rights clubs at each of the selected schools. The groups held fifty-four meetings, during which students learned more about

their rights and responsibilities, studied the concepts of "equality, justice, and rights", and debated practical solutions to help disadvantaged children in the their communities.

In cooperation with school committees, the child's rights groups raised awareness at schools by hanging banners that included rights from the convention. The Tanweer Foundation used different learning methods, which included brainstorming, role-playing, team work, debate, and drawing.

The foundation also assigned children to search for the most important problems they face either within or outside of their school. ■



### Tanweer Foundation

#### Mission:

The foundation targets marginalized people in undeveloped local communities. The Tanweer Foundation aims to effect sustainable development and to push society to develop through organizing and investing energy in communities.

#### Goals:

- Improving local communities socially, culturally, environmentally, and economically through investing in human resources.
- Raising the level of health, education culture, society and the economy among marginalized sectors, especially women, children and people with special needs.
- Supporting and finding talent and art within local communities
- Offering education and development training as well as cultural, scientific, and technological services. <http://www.tanweer-eg.org>



## Grants to Commercial Firms

*By MEPI Grants Unit*

MEPI generally awards grants only to non-profit entities, mostly non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Conversely, MEPI awards of Federal assistance to commercial firms or any corporation, trust or other organization which is organized primarily for profit, are not and should not be a common occurrence. Nevertheless, a commercial firms can be awarded a grant when it is determined that it is the best-suited to carry out a particular project. Commercial firms generally compete for and earn profit from Government procurement contracts, not grants. When awarded a grant the commercial firm is supposed to run it as if it was a non-profit organization. This means that they are not to earn profit from the grant. No amount in excess of actual allowable, allocable, and reasonable direct and indirect costs that are incurred in conducting the project is to be retained by the grantee.

Although the MEPI program legislation does not explicitly confine the assistance it provides to non-profit entities, nor explicitly prohibit grants to commercial firms, it cannot necessarily be inferred that assistance to a for-profit entity is always appropriate and authorized. Because award of assistance to such firms could create the appearance of impropriety, every case has to go through extra steps of scrutiny by the Department of State, reflected in additional days of processing before the award can be made.

Being a commercial firm when awarded federal assistance has also some implications under applicable regulations. Commercial firms will generally be subject to the same administrative requirements as nonprofit grantees (22 CFR Part 145 - Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations), with the following exceptions:

- **Cost Principles** - Unlike traditional nonprofit grantees, the allowability of a commercial firm's cost is not based on OMB Circulars but in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) at 48 CFR part 31.
- **Program Income** - For traditional nonprofit grantees the Grants Officer has the option to allow the recipient to add the program income to funds committed to the project by the Department and recipient and used to further eligible project or program objectives, or even use it to finance the non-Federal share of the project or program. But for grants to commercial firms, there is only one option to deal with program income: It has to be deducted from the total project or program allowable cost in determining the net allowable costs on which the Federal share of costs is based. ■



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## Women and Municipalities: A Platform for Political Participation

The participants were from all different regions of Lebanon, from villages in the south of Lebanon, the Bekaa, Beirut and northern Lebanon.

At the beginning of the event, The President of the Beirut YWCA, Mrs. Nuhad Azoury, provided a brief overview of the mission of the association, which aims to empower women. Mrs. Aida Abdel Samad, the Chairperson of the Center for Women in Crisis (CWIC), presented the project's objectives, activities, and intended impact. This was followed by a speech by the MEPI Coordinator in Lebanon, Amanda Cranmer, representing US Ambassador to Lebanon HE Michele Sison, and by Minister of Interior and Municipalities H.E. Ziad Baroud. Both speakers stressed the importance of women's political participation.

The project's media campaign was presented during the event and it included a TV spot and will run on all main local television channels several times a day. Posters were also hung all over the targeted Lebanese regions.

The purpose of this campaign is to spread awareness about the need for women in Lebanon

to run for public office, to be more engaged in local community issues, and to participate in political life. The TV spot includes a similar message, inciting women to run as candidates in their municipalities.

The media launching

event was attended by the following local TV stations: MTV, TL, and Future TV. In addition the following newspapers and magazines were present: Al Akhbar, Al Balad, Al Mustakbal, Mondanite, and Al Liwaa. Moreover, the event was highlighted in the written press by articles that appeared in the following newspapers: Albalad, Al liwak, Al wakalah, Al Watanniyah lil Aalam, and Al Akhbar.

The media launching was followed by the graduation ceremony and certificate



*A group photo of women participants in the project*

distribution for the twenty-one Lebanese women who participated in the project. The trainees were from all confessional and political backgrounds. A reception was later organized in honor of the event's patron and the distinguished guests from different NGOs, embassies, and media agencies.

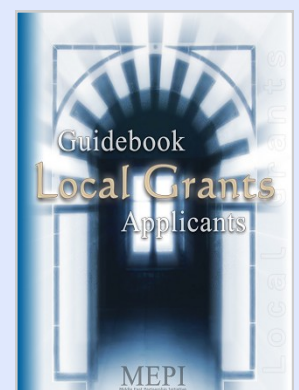
With the goal of enhancing women's public affairs knowledge and leadership skills, as well as raising awareness about women's political participation in Lebanon, the YWCA project on

Women & Municipalities has certainly met its objectives by training women from different ages and regions of Lebanon to run for local elections. Although a lot remains to be done to encourage Lebanese women to participate in politics, such projects bring a great contribution to this long-term process. Accordingly, MEPI has succeeded again in supporting projects that help improve the social, economic, and political status of women in the Middle East. ■

### Submit Your Grant Applications Now!

Funding is available now for Local Grants. Please contact your country's U.S. Embassy MEPI Committee and see the guidebook available on our [website](http://www.medregion.mepi.state.gov) for step-by-step instructions in English and Arabic.

[www.medregion.mepi.state.gov](http://www.medregion.mepi.state.gov)



## Egyptian Youth Trained on Responsible Citizenship

The Arab Foundation for Development and Citizenship (AFDC) completed two, three-day workshops for the benefit of forty young Egyptian men and women. This project was in cooperation with the United Nations Development Program project "Information and Communication technology for the Development of the Arab World".

This training workshop, which took place in Cairo, comes as a part of the MEPI-funded project "Promoting Citizenship to engage Arab Youth".

Mr. Alhosain Al-Sagheir, one of the trainers at the workshops, said "these workshops come as part of AFDC's program to empower Arab Youth in the field of responsible citizenship in a way that places emphasis on their responsibility towards their community and society."

Mr Obaida Fares, the Director of AFDC, said "these two workshops come as an end to this stage of the project, in which AFDC trained 230 young men and women in Lebanon, Morocco, Tun-

sia, and Egypt." Mr. Fares added that "this program enabled AFDC to create a network of Arab Youth who believe in their abilities to be good role model citizens who know their rights without forgetting their responsibilities at the same time. These youths have expressed their willingness to stay in touch with each other and to interact with the outcomes of the program."

Participants in the workshops presented project ideas that could be implemented by Arab Youth in their local communities. AFDC will be supporting Arab Youth to implement some of these projects.

Over the last ten months AFDC has carried out ten workshops as part of MEPI 2010 Civil Society project, implemented in four Arab countries: Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt. This project aims to create responsible Arab citizens through trainings to engage 200 young civil society activists in relevant follow-up programs at the local level. ■



*A training session on Responsible Citizenship*



*Participants interacting with each other during a training session*



### Middle East Partnership Initiative

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), located within the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, is a unique program designed to engage directly with and invest in the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). MEPI works to create vibrant partnerships with citizens to foster the development of pluralistic, participatory, and prosperous societies throughout the MENA region. MEI partners with local, regional and international non-governmental organizations, the private sector, academic institutions, and governments.

#### MEPI Regional Office, Tunis

Housed in the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, the MEPI Regional Office Tunis administers MEPI local projects in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and West Bank/Gaza and accounts for more than \$5 million in program funding in 2010. In addition to coordinating with U.S. Embassies throughout the region, The Tunis RO provides a variety of funding opportunities (such as the MEPI Local Grants program and Civil Society Grants) as well as supporting visits, seminars and training programs to advance reform. ■

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